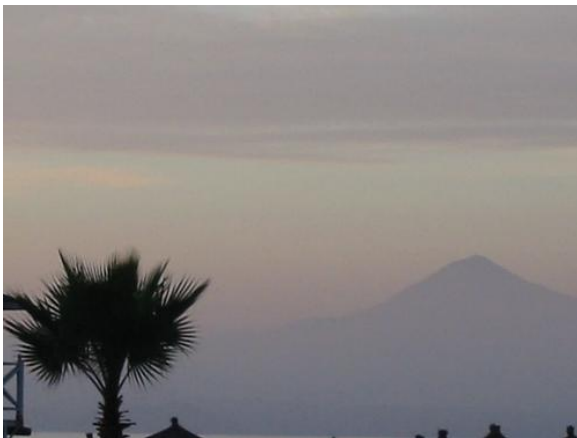


Sunday June 17, 2007
Monday June 18, 2007

Arrived at Milwaukee Airport and met up with the group. There will be four other girls on this trip with me, but only three will be coming by Milwaukee. My professor, Dan Shea, and our travel agent and her husband, Ximena and Mario Rivera, showed up around noon and I got to use my passport for the first time! -- Note 1 -- GET YOUR PASSPORT EARLY!! I filed for mine in early March and it didn't come until June 14th. Both frustrating and nerve-wracking. -- Note 2 -- Put a little effort into your passport photo. But anyhow, we finally got on our way after our first flight was delayed an hour. The flight to Dallas was about two and a half-hours long with a three-hour layover before the long leg of our journey. The flight from Dallas to Santiago was about 9.5 hours of uncomfortable seats and sleepless-ness.

Arriving in Santiago, I had to use my very limited knowledge of Spanish to get through customs. We paid our entry fee (\$100) then went to claim our baggage, which I couldn't find for the longest time. By the time I got my bag, our next flight was scheduled to leave in 10 minutes. Luckily, I got my ticket and through security (much faster than in the states) in time and made the plane. After another two hour flight, we arrived in La Serena, our final destination for the time being. The airport was very quaint. It was bright yellow with a clay tile roof and on the second floor, there was a balcony where people were waiting for their friends/family to arrive. I'll never see that in the US, that's for sure! I do wish I hadn't checked my camera through with my baggage though, because the view of the Andes from the plane and the airport was amazing. I'll have to remember to keep it out on the way back.



View of Andes from our Hotel



View of La Serena Beach from our hotel

It was foggy and about 50°F in La Serena, but the fog made the mountains stick out of the landscape magnificently. We had two cars pick us up and drive us to our hotel on the beach, Serena Beach. As we drove, we saw a vast income difference. The poor part of town was closest to the airport, but as we got closer to town, the houses became more structured and less run down. On the rise off to the left, we could see grand houses with lawns. The economic levels were definitely distinguishable. We drove through town, down toward the coast and arrived at our hotel around 4 or 5 o'clock. Its along a

beautiful stretch of beach (since its winter here, there's nobody around) and there are little eating places dispersed all along the coast. There's a churro stand less than a block away selling 20 churros for 1000 pesos (about two US dollars) and I'm pretty sure I'm going to have to pick some up. I haven't gotten my money exchanged yet, so I can't buy anything...which is bad. But Dan said we're going into town tomorrow and they have Cambios (money exchange places) there.



Sunset on La Serena Beach

After we unloaded our luggage, we all went out to eat. My first meal here was at this little seafood place called Don Chuma. I don't like seafood, so I ordered the chicken. What I didn't anticipate, however, was the Chileans' perspective of a serving size. The waiter came out with an entire half of the bird! Yikes! I definitely couldn't finish all of it, but I made a fairly good dent. The rest of the group ordered various fish dishes that were caught earlier that day. Their proportions were much like mine, if not larger but the fish wasn't outrageously priced. It was actually VERY cheap. In fact, I found that most all the food here is pretty cheap in comparison to the United States.

We walked back to our hotel after dinner. Dan gave us some history on Chile and told us a little about mastodons. He told us how to tell the difference between a mastodon and a mammoth skeleton. Mastodon teeth have rounded and pointed enamel-covered cusps, while mammoth teeth have lots of little ridges of enamel.

When we got back, Ximena was waiting with the cars so she could give us a tour of the city. We saw the museum where we will be working tomorrow and the outdoor shopping area. Then Ximena took us to a supermarket so we could buy some food items for dinner (we have a fully stocked kitchen in our hotel room, so we can cook some meals too!). She told us Chileans don't eat dinner. They have breakfast, lunch, and tea-time. We all decided to try out this lifestyle, so our big meal will be lunch. I'm not sure how long this will last, but we're trying to get into the culture of Chile as much as possible.



Display of Mayonnaise in the supermarket. They apparently really like it because there was an entire aisle of the condiment beyond this.

It's been a long couple of days, so I'll write more tomorrow. Oh! And we also found some stray puppies across the street from our hotel today and they're so adorable!



